BIOGRAPHICAL SUMMARY: Blas Eugenio

"You know, all the plantation house just like in the Philippines before. Ugly kind. But they furnish the fuel, the kerosene, the water, that's why you no pay nothing, you know. And your bill in the hospital, that's all free. But if something happen to you, you no get nothing. They no pay you nothing. For example, you happen to [get] hurt in the working place, or you die over there, get accident over there, they no pay you nothing. Not like nowadays. Even [if] you are sick you get sick leave, they pay you. But before, no more. You just died just like chicken, you know. You no more nothing. They treat you just like more worse than animals, before."

Born February 1, 1909 in Laoag, Ilocos Norte, Philippines, Blas Eugenio was one of nine children. His parents were tenant farmers who grew rice and vegetables. Blas never received formal schooling; instead he was taught to read and write Ilocano by a neighbor. Beginning at age ten, Blas worked as a shoemaker.

At the age of nineteen, in 1928, Blas immigrated to Hawai'i and was sent to Kōloa Sugar Plantation, where he lived in bachelor's quarters in Korean Camp. His first job on the plantation was kālai. He later worked as a cane cutter, hapai kō man, cultivating contractor, and fertilizer man. He also labored in Kōloa Sugar Mill during World War II. Following the war, Blas worked as a harness maker for the plantation. He ended his career as a field worker, retiring in 1974.

In 1936, Blas briefly returned to the Philippines to care for his ill father. During this time, he married his wife, Fausta, but due to a lack of finances and the need for Fausta to care for Blas' father, she remained in the Philippines with their daughter until 1958, when they finally joined Blas in Hawai'i.

Blas and Fausta live in Kōloa. He enjoys camping and fishing.

Tape No. 15-45-1-87

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

with

Blas Eugenio (BE)

June 26, 1987

Kōloa, Kaua'i

BY: Chris Planas (CP)

[NOTE: Also present at the interview is Fausta Eugenio (FE), BE's wife.]

CP: This is an interview with Blas Eugenio on June 26, 1987 at his home in Kōloa, and the interviewer is Chris Planas.

I guess I'll start with your date of birth. What is your date of birth?

BE: February 1, 1909.

CP: And where were you born?

BE: Laoag, Ilocos Norte, Philippines.

CP: What did your parents do for a living?

BE: Farmer.

CP: Both parents?

BE: Yeah.

CP: Do you remember what they did as farmers?

BE: No. (Laughs)

CP: Did they farm their own land?

BE: Oh, no. They hire my father, you know. He work for other people.

CP: What kind of things did he do for them?

BE: Oh, he plant rice. And after harvesting rice he plant any kind vegetables.

CP: Oh, do you remember what kind vegetables?

BE: Pumpkin, squash, long beans, and that garlic, and green onion. And sugarcane.

CP: And your mother helped him out?

BE: No. My mother, she got to take care of the house. Was old already.

CP: What kind of house did you have in the Philippines?

BE: Oh, very small house, you know. We get hard living before.

CP: Can you describe your house? What it looked like?

BE: (Laughs) Funny one, my house. It's a small one, you know. Our [present] house is twice as this one big, I think. This parlor [measures approximately ten feet by twenty feet].

CP: Twice as big as this parlor?

BE: Yeah. And one small kitchen behind. And we get only one bedroom, you know, in the whole thing. And when we sleep, we sleep all on the floor. No more bed.

CP: What was your house made out of?

BE: Made of bamboo and the roof is grass. The long grass, I don't know what they call that one.

CP: Did you rent that house?

BE: No, that was our own house. And the land is our own, too.

CP: Oh. Did you have to make your own house?

BE: Our house, da kine built together with our neighbor's, see. But we set [out food] for [them to] eat, you know. And then some days when they need us, they need my father, he go help them, too. That's the same, same. That's how we get our life in the Philippines.

CP: Did you have to repair your house every so often? Or rebuild?

BE: Oh, yeah. Repair always. Every year when the typhoon going come, before the typhoon, we repair, you know. But we no pay nothing. Our neighbors, they work together, and we serve them, we eat together over there, that's all.

CP: Where did you get the bamboo from?

BE: Oh, that one you can go on the mountains, you know. So many bamboos on the mountains before. You no buy that one. Somebody, they offer you.

CP: How did you bring bamboo back? Did you have transportation?

BE: With the cart. Pull with the carabao.

CP: So you had your own carabao?

BE: No. Our neighbors get. When they work together, you go to bring all what you're going do to help out. If get that one, the cart and the carabao, you got to bring that one. And they no pay you nothing, that. That's how in the olden days before, but I don't know [about] now. I don't know what transportation get now in the Philippines. Because I was young yet before.

CP: So you didn't really have your own transportation?

BE: No, we no more.

CP: Your father, how did he go to work?

BE: The rice field over there is close to our house, you know. If little bit far the owner of the land then come pick up him, and then bring him back again.

CP: Your father worked for more than one person then, yeah?

BE: Oh, yeah.

CP: And you didn't have any land of your own to farm?

BE: No. Only our house lot we had.

CP: How many brothers and sisters did you have?

BE: Only me and three sisters alive. All the rest pass away already.

CP: How many did you have all together?

BE: Before, nine.

CP: How many boys?

BE: Three.

CP: Three boys and what . . .

BE: Six girls. But many of them never live long, you know. When they are small they pass away already.

CP: Oh, why was that?

BE: Was long time, eh? Some below to me, you know. I have two sister now over here in Hawai'i, one below me and one above me, and one in the Philippines, the last one. Only four of us now still living.

CP: Oh, where do your sisters live?

BE: In 'Ele'ele. McBryde [Plantation]. That's the oldest one. And the one below to me is sick, you know. She stay in Mahelona Hospital.

CP: Why did your brothers or sisters die young?

BE: Well, I don't know. The last of the lot was born like that.

CP: I was just wondering if maybe it was because of the hard life or something?

BE: Oh, no. Because my brother, he was over here before, but he just go back Philippines about three years now, and then he pass away.

CP: Were you able to go to school when you were young?

BE: No. We cannot afford to go because we are big family, eh.

CP: None of your brothers or sisters went to school either?

BE: Only my brother above me. The one bin pass away already. But I wen go, what you call that, in the Philippines, they call that "Particular."

CP: They call it what?

BE: Particular. Our neighbor is kind of old man and when we are small kids, boys or girls, he take them for go school in the house. He teach them to read and write that Ilocano dialect. [In a later conversation, BE said that they would repay the man by cleaning his house.] What you call that, you count from one to the highest. And he teach you to, what you call that. . . . What you call that how you pray?

CP: Oh, the prayers.

BE: Yeah, the prayers. That's why I know how to read and write, eh, that Ilocano.

CP: Now this man, he wasn't a teacher, though?

BE: No, he's not a teacher. He just take us to go with him, see.

CP: And that's how you learned to write?

BE: Yeah, how to write and how to read, too, the Ilocano one.

CP: You go to him every day?

BE: Yeah. Except Saturday and Sunday.

CP: And how long did you do that for?

BE: Was no more two years, I think. Because when I know how to read and

write already, I bin quit.

CP: And he invite everybody else in the . . .

BE: Yeah, the ones that like go.

CP: In the village.

BE: Yeah.

CP: Do you remember his name?

BE: Fortunato. But the second name I don't know, I forgot now. He was a blacksmith, you know. That, what you call that, the one make ring [jeweler].

CP: So did you help your family out when you were young? Did you help your father farm?

BE: No, because when I was ten years old, I think, I wen learn to be a shoemaker already.

CP: Oh, who taught you that?

BE: The one stay working over there. They teach me how to make shoes and slippers, and that harness, too.

CP: Did they teach you how to tan the leather, or what did they teach you?

BE: To make the shoes.

CP: What did you have to do?

BE: They get that flat platform for the shoes, and then they give you everything, you make that one, you know, and you sew it with your hand. That's how happen in the Philippines, no more sewing machine, eh. You got to do it with your own self. Even the bridles and the saddles, make it with your hands.

CP: And how did the leather come to you?

BE: They buy, you know, in the other provinces.

CP: Oh, I see. So the leather is already made?

BE: Yeah. That's already made and then delivered to our shop.

CP: You started doing that when you were ten years old?

BE: Yeah.

CP: Did you make pretty good money as a shoemaker?

BE: Oh, olden days, hard living, you know. Good if I can make fifty cent or one (peso) one day.

CP: So then you take the money home to your family?

BE: Yeah. Take it to my own family.

CP: Were there very many other shoemakers in your town?

BE: Oh, yes, many over there.

CP: Who did you sell the shoes to?

BE: Oh, I'm not the one going sell. My boss, the wife and the husband, they go sell them [at] the market or other towns. Because shoemakers mostly in Laoag get that kind business, you know. Not all in the town provinces.

CP: Oh, I see. So you did that for. . . .

BE: I did that until I bin come here in Hawai'i [in 1928].

CP: About nine years?

BE: Yeah, about. I think because I had just finished eighteen years [old] when I come here, see.

CP: How did you find out about Hawai'i?

BE: My sister. The one I mentioned the first time. She came here first, then me. She order [i.e., sent for] me. I was young yet when she come here, my sister.

CP: Your sister was here already?

BE: Yeah, stay in Camp Seven. . . . Camp Seven in 'Ele'ele.

CP: And she wrote letters to you?

BE: Not her, but the husband. Because my sister, she does not know how to read and write too, just like me.

CP: And they told you that you should come to Hawai'i?

BE: Yeah. That's why it happen I think of [coming] here.

CP: So how did you go about it? Who did you contact when you decided that you wanted to come to Hawai'i?

BE: They bin order me and (there was an) official over there in Laoag.

CP: Who ran the office?

BE: Oh that, what you call that [HSPA]. The Hawaiian Plantation Association [Hawai'i Sugar Planters' Association].

CP: Oh, HSPA.

BE: Yeah, HSPA.

CP: And you went there to sign up?

BE: Yeah.

CP: Why did you want to come to Hawai'i?

BE: Because the ones [who] went Hawai'i, they always send money [back to] the Philippines, you know. And all the relatives in Philippines, they become rich, because all the whole time, they send money [to] them. That's why I can ask my sister if they can order me and [she] said, "Oh, yeah, can." That's what wen happen. I stay here now.

CP: So your sister and your brother-in-law, they were already working in Kōloa?

BE: No.

CP: 'Ele'ele.

BE: 'Ele'ele. But my brother-in-law, he pass [away], you know. Only my sister.

CP: When you told your parents that you were going to come to Hawai'i, how did they feel about it?

BE: Oh, they feel sorry but I [told] them that I going try my luck over here because we get hard time over there. We don't know if I can get little bit good luck and I can send money. [They] said, "Okay, go, but be careful. Be good boy over there."

I said, "Okay."

CP: Did anybody else come with you at the same time?

BE: Oh, so many. So many because the big boat boat or ship, the passengers is over 300, you know. Three hundred seventy-five people, I think, from other towns.

CP: Were there any of your friends that came with you?

BE: No. I am alone [from] my town, Laoag.

CP: How did you get to the boat? Where did the boat leave from?

BE: Oh, stay in Manila and the [HSPA] is responsible [for] us already.

When all set to come [to] Hawai'i, they are responsible for you already until you reach over here.

CP: What date was it that you left Philippines?

BE: Oh, I don't know now. I can't remember, but it was 1928, about October or November, I think, 1928.

CP: And how long did the boat trip take?

BE: Oh, that's one month.

CP: One month?

BE: Yeah. One month from Manila to Hawai'i.

CP: Do you remember much about the trip?

BE: Oh, it was terrible, boy. We [encountered] that big storm before. And we wen land first in Hong Kong, Shanghai, Nagasaki, and Yokohama. And then straight to Hawai'i.

CP: Did they let you get off the boat when you stopped?

BE: Oh, yeah, yeah. But got to get permission, you ask permission when you go out. And they give you [limited time] to stay outside.

CP: Were there very many people on the boat that had a hard time taking the trip?

BE: Oh, yeah, some bin die, you know. And you know the ship? Oh, boy, good ship, rough like hell, up and down that one. Sometime the big waves go over the ship, you know. (Laughs)

CP: Where did you sleep?

BE: Inside the boat. Get da kine, the bed, one after another. About four I think. One person, one bed.

CP: You weren't afraid when you were [on the boat]?

BE: Oh, why not? But you no can do nothing. You stay in the boat already.

(Laughter)

BE: But they serve you good, you know, on the boat. When you go eat they serve you on top the boat. The Chinese people serve you.

CP: Oh, the food . . .

BE: Yeah. All everything they serve you, yeah. Even on the midnight time, too, they give you coffee or tea, whatever you want.

CP: Did you get sick in the storm?

BE: Oh, yeah, seasick. Seasick I wen get.

CP: So when did you finally arrive in Honolulu? It was a month after, you said?

BE: Yeah. About one month. It was December, I think. In Honolulu.

CP: How long did you stay in Honolulu?

BE: One week, I think.

CP: Where did you stay for that one week?

BE: They get immigration [station] over there.

CP: And then they assigned you someplace?

BE: Yeah. They asked me [for] the place [that had sent] for me. And I tell them, "You get all my record, you must see all your record over here." [In a later conversation, BE explained that his brother-in-law, who was already living on Kaua'i with BE's sister, "ordered" or sent for him. BE said that the plantation made up the work forms for his brother-in-law to sign, and that the brother-in-law sent the forms to BE in Laoag. BE then took these papers to the HSPA office in Laoag when signing up to work as a plantation laborer.]

"Oh, I'm sorry," they said. (Laughs) So they opened their records and they find out that I coming Kōloa.

CP: And you came to work in Kōloa. Where did you work first?

BE: Kōloa.

CP: Yeah. Where did you---what was your job, your first job?

BE: They call kālai.

CP: How long did you do that for?

BE: Was about two months, I think. And then after that I bin go cut cane, harvest cane.

CP: And how long you do that for?

BE: Oh, that one wen last me long, now. Was about three or four years, I think. And then after that I am not satisfied with my wages, so I bin go to hāpai kō, they call it, I carried [cane on my shoulder].

CP: So you had a lot of field jobs when you first started? You worked in the field?

BE: Yeah.

CP: Was it hard work?

BE: Oh, sure, you work just like a mule, before. In the morning you come sweat from top to bottom, you know. All your clothes wet already. Hard life before, in the olden days.

CP: What time did you start work?

BE: Six o'clock in the morning. When I was a kālai man, I start six to five. Five o'clock, because one day is one dollar, you know. You work ten cent one hour. Ten hours, eh, you work.

CP: Did you work with mostly other Filipinos?

BE: Yeah. All Filipinos.

CP: And who was your luna?

BE: Filipino, too.

CP: Could you speak English very well?

BE: No. I have just learn over here. Because where I come from, after spending Saturday and Sunday, I go outside already [i.e., to other parts of the plantation, such as the plantation store or other camps]. I meet so many guys, you know. Small boys, whatnot. We talk together. It's hard for me to understand [them], but little by little I wen learn, you know.

CP: You worked in the field for a few years, and then you say you got tired?

BE: Yeah, I bin go that hāpai kō again, loading cane.

CP: What happened after that?

BE: That one I quit again. I wen go for that irrigating. Cultivating contractor they call that.

CP: Cultivating contractor. And what did you do? What was your job?

BE: You take care the cane. You irrigate them. Every day like that until harvesting [time] come.

CP: Oh. Where were you assigned to?

BE: Oh. That, they call that field seven.

CP: Field seven?

BE: Yeah, field seven, field six. And over here the first one I went

contract, [field] forty-three.

CP: And as an irrigation man what did you have to do?

BE: You put water on the plant, eh.

CP: Did you spray it with a hose?

BE: No. Get ditch around the field. Big ditch. And then get the small ditch going inside the cane field. That one you open, and then you water all the plants inside.

CP: Oh, I see. You open the gate.

BE: Yeah, open the gate.

CP: And it lets the water run into the field. How would you know how much water to let in?

BE: That one get gate on the fence. Get gate over there. And that one, that's not your own business, that. Only your own business is to take care of the water and water all the plants. The gates, the water gates, that's not your own. [In a later conversation, BE explained that a ditchman near to the reservoir controlled the flow of water throughout the field ditches. It was up to each irrigation man like BE to open the wooden gate for each field needing water to allow that water to flow in.]

CP: So you just try and figure out by guessing, then, how much water to let through?

BE: Yeah.

CP: And how often would you have to irrigate the fields?

BE: It depends [on] the weather, you know. If [there was] too much sun, the ditch going quick dry. And you [are] your own boss. If any place your own fields, he can see 'em dry, he let you go. No more schedule, that. [Later BE said that each irrigation man like himself would be his own boss; he determined "by eye" how much water was needed in a particular field. When he was finished in one place, he would have to go to another field.]

CP: How long did you do that job for?

BE: Oh, sometime I make that two years, one year. Because when I tired again that job I got to go another kind job again. Because if you tired your own job, you can go on another job so long [as] you know [how to do the job]. Not like now. Nowadays, you got to apply, see. But the olden days, no. Different.

CP: When did you go back to the Philippines?

BE: Oh, that was nineteen. . . . Wait. Thirty five, thirty-six. Yeah. Nineteen thirty-six, June, 1936. And then I stayed there about six or seven months. I bin come back 1937. And in that year, '36, I married my wife. September [1936], and come back January 1937. I was in Hawai'i.

CP: So you went back to Laoag?

BE: Yeah, I went back to Laoag.

CP: You know, before you went back to the Philippines, where did you live?

BE: Kōloa.

CP: What kind of house did you live in?

BE: Oh, that's plantation house. Not like this one now. You know, all the plantation house just like in the Philippines before. Ugly kind. But they furnish the fuel, the kerosene, the water, that's why you no pay nothing, you know. And your bill in the hospital, that's all free. But if something happen to you, you no get nothing. They no pay you nothing. For example, you happen to [get] hurt in the working place, or you die over there, get accident over there, they no pay you nothing. Not like nowadays. Even [if] you are sick you get sick leave, they pay you. But before, no more. You just died just like chicken, you know. You no more nothing. They treat you just like more worse than animals, before.

CP: When you were living in the plantation house, where was it located? Was it in a certain camp?

BE: Oh, yeah. I live in, they call it Korean Camp. And our neighbors, Portuguese Camp. And the other boundary is Japanese Camp. So many camps, you know, before.

CP: And where was Korean Camp?

BE: Korean Camp is next to our camp [i.e., not far from where BE resides now on Waila'au Road]. Get Korean Camp, Japanese Camp, German Camp, Puerto Rico [BE probably means Spanish] Camp before.

CP: Was it [Korean Camp] near the mill? Nearby the mill?

BE: No, different place, too, over there.

CP: I'm trying to get a picture as to where it was located.

BE: Korean Camp is way up to our place [on Waila'au Road], now. In my place, now, this was all Korean Camp, you know. Korean Camp is a big place before. [Most Kōloa residents said that Korean Camp was located on the present site of the Waiōhai cottages.]

CP: Oh, where we are at now?

BE: Yeah. Right here.

CP: Oh, I see. In other words, where all these houses are on Waila'au [Road], that was Korean Camp?

BE: All Korean Camp before. And then other side, they get the Portuguese Camp, you know. And way on the other side again, that's Shinagawa Camp. Yeah, that's how.

CP: And you lived there for a long time?

BE: Oh, yeah, since 1928 until now I never move yet [BE meant that he hasn't moved from the general area. Later BE said that he lived in the same L-shaped house from 1928 to 1970, at which time he bought the lot where he presently resides.]

CP: Before you went to Philippines you stay in the same house?

BE: Yeah, same house.

CP: How many people stayed in that house with you?

BE: Oh, our house, that was big, you know. That form is just like L, go this way (makes L-shape with hands). And three kitchens, that house. We are living about thirteen or fourteen people, I think.

CP: How many people to one room?

BE: All depend [on the] size of the room. If big one, can hold two or three people inside. But in my room before, I live only one. Because I bin complain [to] our boss, the camp boss, that I cannot sleep if I sleep with others that snore in the nighttime.

(Laughter)

BE: So that's why they bin give me special room.

CP: Oh, lucky then, eh.

BE: Yeah. And special kitchen, too, you know. I [am the] only one [in] my room and only in my kitchen. I no more companion.

CP: Oh, you're lucky. Just like your own apartment.

BE: (Laughs) That's right.

CP: And you had kitchen, and bathroom was where?

BE: That's a common bathroom, big one.

CP: Outside?

BE: Yeah, outside.

CP: How about showers or bath?

BE: We get.

CP: Outside too?

BE: But you make your own hot water. Get big box, you fill 'em with cold water and then make fire under with the firewood. They [plantation] give the firewood, you know, and the kerosene. Put firewood first and then you throw the kerosene and then burn 'em. Big one, about [ten] people can go inside [at one time], you can use that one, hot water.

CP: You all share the bathtub?

BE: Oh, yeah.

CP: So that means you got to wait, yeah? You got to wait in line to take a bath, like that?

BE: No, because our kind big one, you know. About ten people can go one time.

CP: Oh, that's interesting. What kind of food did you eat?

BE: You know the Filipino food already, eh. Rice, meat, but morning time I eat bread. And eggs. But mostly I eat rice, eh, lunch and supper.

CP: You bring lunch with you to the field?

BE: Yeah, you bring. Cook your own, bring your own. (Laughs)

CP: How about your laundry? Who would do your laundry for you?

BE: Oh, [you] must do [your] own laundry, you know. But if you get hard time, you got to hire somebody. You pay one or three dollars one month for your own laundry. Only your own clothes except your blanket and bedspread, that one is not included, you know. If you give that, got to pay more high.

CP: It was kind of expensive, eh?

BE: Oh, yeah. Expensive. And you figure that [we] only [earned] one dollar, one day before. (Laughs) That's why so many guys, they launder their own clothes. But me, I never make that one because I was single, eh, before. I got to go [have a] little bit [of] good fun around [here], eh, (laughs) no can do nothing. But I got to work every day before. You no work, you no more nothing to eat.

CP: I'm going switch the tape around.

END OF SIDE ONE

SIDE TWO

CP: When you went back to the Philippines, did they pay for your way back?

BE: Oh, yeah, they pay.

CP: And that's when you got married [in 1936]?

BE: Uh huh [yes].

CP: Did you know your wife before?

BE: Oh, yeah. We were neighbors before. And we grow up the same time.

CP: You were saying that you got married, but then you came back by yourself.

BE: Yeah. And that one I did pay my own already, transportation.

CP: Oh. How come you came back by yourself? You leave your wife in Philippines?

BE: Yeah. I wen leave [them] and come back over here. And I bin order them nineteen. . . . Nineteen fifty, Ma? (BE asks wife.) Fifty-eight, I think.

FE: Fifty-eight.

BE: When you come here to Hawai'i.

FE: Yeah.

BE: Yeah, 1958. That's the first time I bin see the sight of my girl. She was about twenty-one years old already.

CP: How come you stay apart for so long?

BE: Oh, because. . . . I no more enough yet money to support my family in the Philippines, yeah.

CP: Oh, I see. What did your wife do while she stayed in Philippines? You mentioned something about your father was ill or something. Your father was sick . . .

BE: Oh, yeah, that's the reason I bin go back the Philippines, because I bin get cablegram that our father is sick, you know. And if possible, they like me to go right away. So I bin go straight to our manager over here in Koloa and he allow me to go, see. And give

me one year vacation, but I (didn't use it all). So I stay there seven months. Come back already.

CP: They don't pay you for vacation?

BE: No. No pay nothing.

CP: So you went and then you married your wife?

BE: Yeah, married my wife.

CP: And then she was pregnant, she hāpai?

BE: Yeah, she was pregnant from early. And she deliver baby 1937, June. June 4, 1937.

CP: And your wife lived with your family?

BE: Yeah. She lived [with] my own family.

CP: Your father was still sick after you came back?

BE: Oh, no. He was really good when I come back already. He bin go back work that time I bin come [back] here. Everybody was surprised, they said that, "Oh, you are the medicine of your father," they said. And I never let him [go] to hospital, you know. He just only stay home, and I asked him what he like eat, he like drink. And the one he mention, I go buy. That's how he come well. And until that when he was really well already, he bin tell me that, "Now son, even I make, even I die, even you stay, so long you get married, you leave your wife over here and [she'll be] the one responsible for me." So I bin get married before I come back in Hawai'i, you know.

CP: But when you first went [to the] Philippines, were you thinking about getting married?

BE: No. I wasn't thinking about it.

CP: When you came back did you come back to the same house in Korean Camp?

BE: Yeah, same thing.

CP: And did you [go] back to the same job or to a different job?

BE: [I] go back the same job. Fertilizing.

CP: And what did you have to do for that job?

BE: Fertilizing? Oh, you fertilize all the cane. You throw with your hand. You take one lane [i.e., line], one time. Not like nowadays, now you can take about six or eight lines, you know, one time. But

before, no. Got [to be] about eight inch away from the cane. Straight line, you know, follow the line. They are real strict before.

CP: You carried the fertilizer in a sack?

BE: Yeah, yeah, you carry. One bag. You tie the edge, on the other edge and go like that. You open on the one edge and tie them, and carry to your shoulder, and you throw.

CP: How heavy were the bags?

BE: That's mostly hundred-pound one.

CP: Oh, hundred pound?

BE: You do that by acre, you know. Not by hours, by acre.

CP: You have to finish all the acres before you finish work?

BE: Oh, yeah. You got to finish all because you get one of your men deliver the fertilizer with the mule. He figure how many acre and how many bags you going put on one acre. That's why we got to finish all before pau hana time, you know. Because you don't know if going rain. If going rain, that one all melt. Finish all that.

CP: And how long did you do this job?

BE: That was about one year and a half, I think.

CP: That was until about 1940 then?

BE: Yeah. [Before] the World War [II] time.

CP: Oh. What did you do during the war? What kind of job did you have?

BE: I went on that, what you call that, sugar mill. I dry sugar.

CP: And how did you dry sugar? What did you have to do for that?

BE: Oh, get da kine machine over there. I watch four [centrifugal] machines one time.

CP: What did the machines do?

BE: They dry molasses, make it to sugar.

CP: What kind of machines were they? Were they big . . .

BE: Big one all right, that. The molasses dry, it come to sugar. Ten bags, I think, one load.

CP: And what did they do? How did they dry it? Did they spin around?

BE: They spin around. That's automatic, that.

CP: And you just watch?

BE: Yeah, just watch.

CP: Was it easier than working in the field?

BE: Oh, yeah.

CP: And you worked that job for. . . .

BE: Oh. . . . I forgot how many is that, during the wartime. Oh, that one bin last me long, you know.

CP: Who was your boss in the mill?

BE: That, our boss [i.e., mill engineer] is half German and half Hawaiian. His name is [Herman] Brandt, [Jr.].

CP: Did you get along good with your bosses?

BE: Oh, yeah. If you are not good to him, throw you out, you know. (Laughs)

CP: Oh, yeah.

BE: And really is good guy, too. So long you do your own job in the mill, they no bother, you know. They no bother you.

CP: In the mill, did you work with different kinds of people?

BE: Oh, yeah, but mostly Filipino. And our luna over there is German. His name is [Carl] Gregg.

CP: Did you ever get promoted or you always stayed the same job?

BE: No, I bin quit that one. I bin go to another department. Make sugar with that ti roots.

CP: Ti roots?

BE: Ti roots, they said.

CP: So that was another section?

BE: Yeah, another section, that. That's only for daytime, that.

CP: And what did you do?

BE: We grind that ti roots. Get big roots, you know, under the ground. We dig that one and wash it, and then grind it. We get our own mill, you know. Not the sugar mill, we get another one to grind

that. And then we boil that and it depend on how many gallons we make. I get three big kind [tanks] to put that one. One tank can hold about 750 gallons, see. And we get three tanks like that. We fill them all that one. Make it [into] sugar.

CP: And these tanks, they used to dry it into the sugar?

BE: No, different one again. Different one. You boil that and then when stay real boiled, you bring 'em up, the juice, and then get one machine on top to make the sugar over there. Just like in the sugar mill. Dries to sugar. But the sugar [from] that one, ti roots, is more fine, you know, than the cane sugar. And different taste, more sweet, that one. I stay there until the Grove Farm and McBryde merged together [in 1974].

CP: Then after that, what job did you have?

BE: Before I go on the mill, I bin go work on the [plantation] stable for that harness maker, not the stable man, you know.

CP: Oh, harness maker?

BE: Harness maker my job over there. Fix bridle, make saddles, and everything for the horse.

CP: Oh, it's good then you use your shoemaking talent, yeah?

BE: Yeah, uh huh.

CP: How long did you do that for?

BE: That one I bin take out until Kōloa [and] Grove Farm merge together [in 1948].

CP: When you make harness, how many horses you have to take care of?

BE: No. I no take care the horses. That's different people take care da kine, the horses. Not me. My job is only the harness maker. I get my own shop over there. All the broke one use by the horses, that's the one I fix. And I make new one, too. Saddles and bridles.

CP: Oh, you make saddles, too?

BE: Saddles and bridles. And the cowboy whip. I make that, too. I learn over here, that one now. And that cowboy rope, I make too over here.

CP: And the plantation supply you with all the materials?

BE: Oh, yeah. All everything. They give me all that.

CP: Did you work with anybody else?

BE: No, only me alone.

CP: Were you the only one that could do that?

BE: Yeah, only me. The old man, the one work over there before, that's the one I replace him. He [was] too old, so they bin fire him.

CP: Oh, what was his name?

BE: Oh, I forgot. That's Puerto [Rican] you know, the old man. Kind of short man.

CP: So where was your shop at?

BE: Oh, right over there before. Beside the place where the stables stay together. On the side.

CP: What's over there now?

BE: No more now. They make it cane field now.

CP: Whose horses were over there?

BE: That's [Kōloa] Plantation one.

CP: The lunas' horses, or . . .

BE: Yeah. Lunas and that timekeeper. Because the timekeeper, they just go around, before, in the field.

CP: Was that [harness making] a hard job?

BE: No. That's not hard job because I know already in the Philippines, eh. I used to know. And I no more luna, you know. My job is my luna before. And our luna---the luna cowboy is my luna, too, you know. German. He no bother me. If no more nothing broke over there I got to sit down. He don't like me go help the stable guys, you know. Once, I bin go help over there, he caught me. He scold me, you know. He said, "Hey, Blas."

I said, "Yes, sir?"

"That's not your own job. Your job is over here. If nothing broke, got to sit down. Don't help them," he said. Oh, how good guy that fellow told me. (Laughs)

CP: Who was he? What was his name?

BE: [William Kuhlman].

CP: And he was German?

BE: German, German. Tall guy. Handsome man, boy.

CP: Did they give you the tools to do that?

BE: Yeah.

CP: They gave you the tools?

BE: They give me one. And I (had) my own because I need too, you know. They got to give me the iron and I can [make things for the saddles]. And mostly the tools I use belong to them.

CP: Oh, I see. After the merger what did you do? [Later BE recalled that he stopped working as a harness maker when the cane-grabbing machine came into use in Koloa. In conversations with Andres Labrador, a stableman at the time, AL remembered this to be about 1948, when Koloa and Grove Farm merged.]

BE: After, I bin go back to cane harvesting again.

CP: Why did you stop working as [a harness maker]?

BE: They no use the mules already. They use the grabbing machine, to grab the cane, eh [i.e., mechanical cane grabber which now loads cane onto trucks]. No more, they no use for riding that horse already. Because the mules before, they use that one to pull out the cane [from] the field, and the locomotive pull 'em out to bring [to] the mill before. But since that McBryde take over, they take off all everything that horse job. [BE probably means when Koloa and Grove Farm merged, in 1948.]

CP: So no need [for horses or mules]?

BE: Yeah, no need.

CP: So then you go back to . . .

BE: Harvesting, cut cane again.

CP: Oh, hard job again.

BE: Yeah, hard job. Until I retired [in 1974].

CP: By that time your wife had come already?

BE: Oh yeah. Because 1958 they bin come here. My wife and my girl.

CP: Before your wife came you always live in the same house?

BE: Yeah.

CP: From nineteen---from the time you came in 1928?

BE: Yeah. But when they came all my housemate, they bin go find their own house, you know. And so only us lived in that big house. Only

three people. My wife, me, and my girl. All the others bin go out. Because so many back on house before. [In a later conversation, BE said that there were many houses to choose from in which to live. Many of these houses were for multiple occupancy, often six to eight persons at a time. Anyone wanting to move into a particular house had to get the approval of the other occupants. BE did recall that the camp boss could require a man to live in a certain house, against the wishes of the individual or the occupants.] You can go anyplace you like, the house. And long after that they said that they going broke down all the old houses over there, so everybody go buy [a] lot already, if you get money. I figure after my wife came, no good if we live over here, bumbai they going knock 'em all down, we don't have place to live. So we wen buy lot over here. The note is about. . . .

FE: Five thousand [dollars].

BE: Oh, [$]5,000 the lot before.

CP: When did you buy the lot?

BE: When was that, Ma? What time that we wen buy our lot?

FE: I don't know now. It was 1974, I think.

BE: No. Because 1974 I was pension already, and the house is there now, yeah.

CP: Oh, you were living here [BE's present residence] by the time you retired?

BE: Yeah. I was living here then.

CP: I think the last time you told me you came here in 1970.

BE: Might be something like that yeah. Seventy, I think.

CP: So you [bought] the lot for [$]5,000?

BE: Yeah, [$]5,000.

CP: And then you [built a] house?

BE: Yeah, build our house.

CP: How much [did] it cost to build your house?

BE: Yeah, [$]38,000, I think. Not so dear yet before. But nowadays, oh, boy. The house and lot now [worth] [$]85[,000] to [$]100,000, now.

CP: You [were] lucky. You buy when the price is good, eh?

BE: (Laughs) So long we get something to live.

FE: But so long as we get shade.

BE: Anyway, our place is good location, eh.

CP: You were living here [for a] long time before your wife and daughter come? You know, you spent a long time without having [a] family. About thirty years, yeah, you lived here [with] no family?

BE: Yeah, that's right.

CP: What did you do for recreation? Did you have any hobbies?

BE: Oh. Saturday and Sunday, especially Saturday night, I gathered some of my friends, you know. We go by the beach, sleep over there. Go fishing.

CP: You camp out?

BE: Stay there. Yeah. Stay there two nights and one day.

CP: Which beach you go to?

BE: Māhā'ulepū side. Along the beach over there. So many places to stay nighttime, you know, over there. Good. The beach no more mosquitoes nighttime. And have plenty fish, you know, before, the olden days. Not like now.

CP: What did you use to fish with?

BE: That, only the short bamboo before. No more the throw line [i.e., rod and reel] before. Only the bamboo. The long bamboo.

CP: What kind of fish did you used to catch?

BE: Oh, any kind fish, but mostly the good fish, you know. The nice one. You can catch <u>ulua</u>, but you cannot land 'em, you know, big kind, eh, that one. The line go broke. But the baby kind all right, you can land 'em up.

FE: <u>Pāpio</u>.

BE: <u>Pāpio</u>.

CP: And you go take your friends and you what, you had a car? You drive down there?

BE: We walk. No more car yet. The only one who had car before over here is our manager, you know. The Kōloa manager, the plantation manager, get only one car over here, the touring kind. Ford. Only him get car before. All of us no more. You go barefoot anyplace you go.

CP: And then when you went down there, did you take a tent or did you just sleep out in the open?

BE: Oh, we sleep by the cave. So many caves around there. No more tent. Sleep over there. And our pots and everything, we leave 'em over there.

CP: Oh, you leave 'em in the cave?

BE: Yeah, we leave 'em over there. The next time we go, all stay over there already.

(Laughter)

BE: And nobody steal 'em. Good fun we leave over there. No more town yet, before, the olden days.

CP: You said that you bought a car though, eh? Did you buy a car?

BE: Oh, that was 1935 already.

CP: Not too many people had cars, eh?

BE: Oh, yeah, that's right. Not too many people.

CP: So then when you buy a car, did you go out more on the weekends?

BE: Not so much.

CP: Your friends, [did] they catch a ride with you?

BE: Oh, yeah. Only if they like go someplace and I go with them. But I no let them pay, you know. I let them ride, but I no like them pay [for] their own ride.

CP: When you did have a car where would you go?

BE: Oh, sometime I go Līhu'e, sometime I go Hanalei or Kōke'e. For recreation time. But not often, you know.

CP: What did you do in Kōke'e or Hanalei?

BE: Oh, just only go around for visit for a while. But the weather over there is cooler than over here. And so many fruit, too, you know, can eat over there.

CP: You pick fruit?

BE: Yeah, pick fruits. In Hanalei we go for camping, you bring your own lunch, eh, eat over there. Or you get your bamboo, you get fish over there. You going all around, you can catch fish, you know. Plenty fish before.

CP: And what else did you do? Did you play sports or anything like that?

BE: Yeah. We play da kine volleyball, you know. Volleyball. And baseball, too. But from plantation to our other plantation, they meet together over there. Especially Rizal Day, we make that one, volleyball and baseball.

CP: Did you make teams? Were you on a team?

BE: Yeah, we get team.

CP: All Filipinos?

BE: All Filipinos.

CP: Rizal Day was a big celebration?

BE: Oh, yeah. Every year that. Our celebration. In our plantation before, especially in our camp, Korean Camp, because Korean Camp is [one of] the biggest one in Koloa, the plantation furnish us one pig or one cow, you know, Rizal Day time. Every year like that before. They give us and we cook and eat. But only us Filipinos. The other nationality, they no like come. Only us Filipinos.

CP: I think we can stop right here.

BE: Oh, okay.

END OF INTERVIEW

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